

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Division of Agricultural Development
Agricultural Development & Diversification Program (ADD)
Grant Project Final Report

Contract Number: 20026

Grant Project Title: Certified Organic Agriculture Cluster Development (COACD)

Amount of Funding Awarded: \$36,500.00

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Please use the following questions as a guide for writing your grant project final report. In your final report, please answer each question as it relates to your grant project.

What was the original intent of the grant? The purpose of the Certified Organic Agriculture Cluster Development (COADC) is to create a statewide network of organic livestock producers working with organic grain producers to further develop organic farming in Wisconsin. This network of producers will benefit agricultural producers by linking organic dairy, broiler, pullet/egg production, beef, sheep, goats and swine livestock producers with organic grain producers. The development of clusters of farmers helping farmers will benefit organic producers by (1) sourcing reasonably priced organic grain within the state, (2) keeping organic dairies as organic, (3) developing new markets for organic grain and (4) creating sustainable agricultural communities throughout the state of Wisconsin. These clusters will allow organic agriculture producers to take control of their own destiny by building direct relationships between suppliers and users of organic grains. At the NFO National Conference in January, Carmen Fernholz, organic farmer of the year 2005 and vice president of Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM), said, "Increased consumer demand has in turn driven up the need for organic grain; that's why a marketing agency in common is vital to organic producers. It's essential for organic grain producers to collaborate with livestock and dairy producers in order to maintain profitability for all sectors."

1)

- What did you want to accomplish with the grant?
- How was it expected to benefit Wisconsin Agriculture? This project will grow the amount of organic Livestock producers by providing local organic grains, which will keep transportation costs and cost of grain components to a lower price for livestock producers while developing long lasting markets for organic grain producers at sustainable prices.
- What makes this project work important or significant? If the organic livestock producers cannot obtain reliable, reasonably priced grains to feed their livestock they will exit the marketplace that in turn will lose markets for organic grain producers. Imports into the food side of grain production are taking more grain producers into the feed marketplace so it is imperative to keep that market viable for Wisconsin organic production. In creating stable and growing markets for organic grain and livestock producers, we grow Wisconsin Agriculture, and create new jobs for many through out the state.

- 2) What steps did you take to reach your goal? We followed our work plan as outlined in our grant submission in addition to taking part in a panel of grain marketing presentation at the Upper Midwest Organic Conference in February. In addition, a survey was sent out to 110 producers to ascertain what they were looking for in help and education to market their grain. These comments will be added to our work plan for the upcoming year.
- What worked? Telephone and written communication about our cooperative, new crops, and inventory sharing all have benefited the organic production and future growth of organics. In addition to working with producers, we were instrumental in transitioning 878.75 acres into Organic Production, aided a processing plant to become certified organic and mentored three young men to enter into Organic Dairy Production.
 - What challenges did you face? The largest challenge was and still is adapting the software program from conventional grain inventory to organic inventory. We are still working out kinks on how to maintain inventory from those producers who have shared numbers but do not belong to our cooperative and those who are members. While it is not relevant to the project itself, inventories need to be kept separate so we know what grains can be marketed immediately to livestock producers.
 - What would you do differently? I would focus more on the education of producers on risk management, collaborative marketing and on available markets for food grade organic grains. In the future educational materials will be developed to share with all Wisconsin Organic Producers.
- 3) What were you able to accomplish?
- What are the results from this project? We have accomplished the start of a statewide inventory management system. We have attained information from about 1/4 of the states producers. More time is needed to complete our project, but we understood from the start that building the trust needed would be a time consuming effort and that has proven to be true. We have increased sales from producer to producers and for grain producers into the food market to over 1/4 of a million in sales this year compared to 170,000 last year.
 - Include any analysis of data collected or materials developed through project work. Education and trust are the key components of this project going further. Mentors especially in the role of risk management would be beneficial to the growth of organics in our state. Those producers who are transitioning to organics from conventional operations based on the desire for higher returns on their products, rather than a desire for a healthier lifestyle are apt to face more challenges and need to have more knowledge of organics to help them stay in organics.
- 4) What conclusions can you make based on project work the analysis of collected data? See above
- 5) What do you plan to do in the future because of this project? We intend to continue to work with producers one on one to continue developing the clusters, we will add stronger educational components to our plans, and do more face-to-face visits.
- 6) What information or additional resources are needed to commercially develop this enterprise? Time, more employees and larger sales volumes.
- 7) How should the agricultural industry use the results from your grant project? A state effort to help educate all producers in risk management farming rather than assuming all farmers are capable of becoming sustainable. This is already being done in part through the AG innovation Department. The NxLevel training will be of great benefit. I would like to see more done with youth mentoring and promotion of farming as a viable occupation in the state. While I am sure there are programs available, not much is done in organic production and that seems to be where the interest lies in our young producers. If there is something in place, you are not promoting it well enough so that everyone is aware of the program.

Respectfully submitted,
Paulette D Bradley